

us to do. We can have differences, no question about it, but the Senate Republicans are acting responsibly.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, next week the Supreme Court is going to hear oral arguments in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*. This is a case that could not mean more to a woman's ability to exercise her constitutionally protected health care rights. As this case now moves forward, I want to take a few minutes today to explain how much is at stake and why it is so critical that Texas's extreme anti-abortion law be treated as exactly what it is: unconstitutional.

Madam President, in Texas and across the country, extreme rightwing conservatives continue to try and turn back the clock on American women. Just yesterday, the Fifth Circuit allowed a Louisiana law to go into effect. That law would leave women with only one health center where they can exercise their reproductive rights.

This debate is frustrating, it is disappointing, and, frankly, it is appalling that in the 21st century—43 years since the historic ruling in *Roe v. Wade*—we even have to have a discussion about whether a woman has the right to make her own decisions about her own body. But one thing that has always kept me going is seeing that when their health and their rights and their opportunities are at stake, women stand up and make it clear why reproductive freedom is so important.

As we have fought back against Texas's extreme anti-abortion law, women have explained that because they were able to plan when they had children, they were able to escape abusive relationships. They have told us that because they had control over their own bodies, they were able to break cycles of poverty generations long and give back to their communities. They have shared their experiences of making the extraordinarily difficult decision to end a pregnancy out of medical necessity. These are powerful stories about the difference self-determination makes for women. These stories are possible because of constitutional rights affirmed in *Roe v. Wade* and protected in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

If Texas's extreme anti-abortion law stands, three-quarters of clinics in the State are expected to shut down—three-quarters of them. As a result, 900,000 women of childbearing age in Texas will have to drive as far as 300 miles round trip just to get the care they need. And women in States with laws like Texas will face similar barriers.

I believe strongly that a right means nothing without the ability to exercise that right. Laws like those in Texas and Louisiana, which are driven by ex-

treme conservative efforts to undermine women's access to care, are, without question, getting in between women and their constitutional rights, especially the rights of women who cannot afford to take off work and drive hundreds of miles when they need health care.

Put simply: Texas's extreme anti-abortion law and laws like it across the country threaten women's lives. These laws are intended to take women back to the days before *Roe v. Wade* when women had less control over their bodies and their futures.

As a mother, as a grandmother, and as a U.S. Senator, I know that is absolutely the wrong direction for our country. Our daughters and granddaughters should have more opportunity and stronger rights, not less. That is why 163 Democratic and Independent Members of the House and Senate urged the Supreme Court in an amicus brief to stand up for women's constitutionally protected health care rights. And it is the reason that even some of our Republican colleagues are focused on doing everything they can to undermine the Supreme Court.

My Democratic colleagues and I are focused on how much the Court's decision in this case will mean for women now and for generations to come. So instead of trying to obstruct justice, we are urging the Supreme Court to ensure justice by upholding settled law. For women, being able to exercise their constitutionally protected reproductive rights means health, it means freedom, and it means opportunity. We cannot and we should not go backward. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to recognize February as National Children's Dental Health Month. Since 1981, this month has afforded us the opportunity to acknowledge the importance of children's dental health, recognize the significant strides we have made and the work that remains to be done, and renew our commitment to ensuring all children in our country have access to affordable and comprehensive dental services. To echo former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, "there is no health without oral health."

Despite being largely preventable, tooth decay is the single most chronic health condition among children and adolescents in the United States. It is 5 times more common than asthma and 20 times more common than diabetes. Nearly half, 44 percent, of the children in the United States will have at least one cavity by the time they start kindergarten. Children with cavities in their primary or "baby" teeth are three times more likely to develop cavities in their permanent adult teeth, and the early loss of baby teeth can

make it harder for permanent teeth to grow in properly.

Left untreated, tooth decay can not only destroy a child's teeth, but also can have a debilitating impact on his or her health and quality of life. Tooth and gum pain can impede a child's healthy development, including the ability to learn, play, and eat nutritious foods. Recent studies have shown that children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely to miss school due to dental pain, and children reporting recent toothaches are four times more likely to have a lower grade point average than their peers without dental pain.

Tooth decay and oral health problems also disproportionately affect children from low-income families and minority communities. According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 80 percent of childhood dental disease is concentrated in 25 percent of the population. These children and families often face inordinately high barriers to receiving essential oral health care, and, simply put, the consequences can be devastating.

Madam President, many have heard me speak before about the tragic loss of Deamonte Driver, a 12-year-old Prince George's County resident. In 2007, Deamonte's death was particularly heartbreaking because it was entirely preventable. What started out as a toothache turned into a severe brain infection that could have been prevented by an \$80 extraction. After multiple surgeries and a lengthy hospital stay, sadly, Deamonte passed away—9 years ago today. So today we mark the ninth anniversary of his tragic death.

Since the tragic death of Deamonte in 2007, we have made significant progress in improving access to pediatric dental care in the country. For example, in 2009, Congress reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program—CHIP—with an important addition: a guaranteed pediatric dental benefit. Today, CHIP provides affordable comprehensive health coverage, including dental coverage, to more than 8 million children. Thanks to CHIP, we now have the highest number of children in history with medical and dental coverage. In addition, in 2010, Congress included pediatric dental services in the set of essential health benefits established under the Affordable Care Act.

I am very proud my State of Maryland has been recognized as a national leader in pediatric dental health coverage. In a 2011 Pew Center report, "The State of Children's Dental Health," Maryland earned an A and was the only State to meet seven of the eight policy benchmarks for addressing children's dental health needs.

In addition, in the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, every qualified health plan now includes pediatric dental coverage, so families do not have to pay a separate premium for dental coverage for their children and do not have a separate deductible or out-of-

pocket limit for pediatric dental services.

However, Madam President, more work remains to be done. For example, according to a recent report by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, three out of four children covered by Medicaid did not receive all required dental services over a recent 2-year period, with one in every four failing to see a dentist at all. This is simply unacceptable. We must act to ensure that all American children have access to comprehensive oral health care.

I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort. Tragically, our health care system was not there for Deamonte. Today, on the ninth anniversary of his death, let us honor his memory and pledge to do better for the children in our country by working together to build on the significant strides we have made over the past 9 years, and to ensure that all children have access to affordable and comprehensive pediatric dental services.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, notwithstanding our occasional dustups and kerfuffles and disagreements that we have in the Senate—and that is not a bad thing—the Senate is supposed to be a place where differences of opinion and different points of view are debated, voted on, and played out here on the floor of the Senate in an attempt to achieve consensus on a bipartisan basis and make legislative progress for the American people.

I have to say that since 2015, under new leadership, this Chamber has been marked by a spirit of hard work, bipartisanship, and accomplishment. I am sure we have all been frustrated by the things we cannot accomplish because, frankly, there is no consensus, but that shouldn't deter us from working together where we can to make progress for the American people. So I am frankly proud of what the Senate has done, again on a bipartisan basis.

I think one of the greatest frustrations under the previous leadership was that even if you were a Member of the majority party, you could not get amendments on legislation. You could not get votes on amendments. So you were basically shut out of the process, not just if you were in the minority but including when you were in the majority. That is a little hard to explain to your constituents back home. Indeed, I think that is one reason we saw some races for the Senate turn around the way they did in 2014.

The truth is that under new leadership we have proved we can work together on the issues that matter most to the people of our country. That is not to say there will not be some par-

tisan differences. There is a reason people choose to be Republicans or Democrats. But my experience has been that most of the time we agree on the goal, just not on the means to achieve the goal.

While bipartisanship is important, leadership really does matter, and I think we have seen what a difference it can make in the 114th Congress—since the last election in 2014. I will mention just a couple of examples.

One is the first major overhaul to education reform since No Child Left Behind. We also passed a major long-term Transportation bill. I know it seems like a small thing in isolation, but it really does make a difference to fast-growing States such as mine—Texas—to be able to plan ahead when it comes to maintaining and operating our transportation infrastructure. Frankly, it saves taxpayer money when you can plan on the long haul rather than in a series of starts and stops.

A subject that is near and dear to my heart is the first major help we have been able to provide to victims of human trafficking in 25 years. Because of a resource deficit at the local level, a lot of big-hearted people who wanted to help simply didn't have the resources to do it—simple things such as rescuing people who are victims of human trafficking and providing them a safe place to stay. Now, as a result of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, we are going to be able to provide through a victim's compensation fund up to \$60 million a year to help provide grants for housing, for rescue, and for victims of human trafficking.

It is true there are some differences between the political parties, and that shouldn't be a matter for panic. We shouldn't say: Well, I guess we can't do anything since we can't do this one thing. It is certainly true with respect to the recent passing of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

It is clear that we have reached a major point of disagreement or I guess you could look at it this way: We actually are agreeing with the position that Vice President BIDEN took when he was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. We are now agreeing with the position that was taken by then-Senate Democratic leader REID, and we are agreeing with the position that was taken in 2007 by Senator CHUCK SCHUMER, a Member of the senior Senate leadership of the Democratic Party.

I mentioned these yesterday. I will just go over them really quickly again. Surely, our Democratic friends don't think that Republicans, when we are in the majority, ought to be constrained by different rules than apply to them. That does not make any sense at all. How foolish we would be, in the majority, to say that this is the way that Democrats view the rules and that we are going to apply a different set of rules to ourselves.

This is what Senator REID said in 2005. He said:

The duties of the Senate are set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Nowhere in that docu-

ment does it say the Senate has a duty to give Presidential appointees a vote.

That is a fact. Senator REID is correct. The President proposes a nominee, and the Senate either grants or withholds consent under the terms of the Constitution itself. But of course, that is what Senator REID was suggesting back when George W. Bush was President of the United States—that the Senate was under no obligation to even give those nominees a vote.

Then, more recently, there is Senator SCHUMER, who I know is really stirred up about our intention not to process a nominee this year and to have a referendum as a result of this Presidential election on who makes that appointment—perhaps for the next 30 years. That is how long Justice Scalia served on the Supreme Court of the United States. But here is Senator CHUCK SCHUMER, the senior Senator from New York. This was 18 months before President George W. Bush left office—18 months, or a year and a half, before he left office.

Senator SCHUMER said: For the rest of this President's term, we “should reverse the presumption of confirmation.” In other words, he was saying there was a presumption against confirming. He said he would recommend to his colleagues that we should “not confirm a Supreme Court nominee except in extraordinary circumstances.”

Then, of course, more recently a little research was done into the record of Vice President BIDEN when he was Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee back in 1992. He said: The Senate Judiciary Committee should seriously consider not scheduling confirmation hearings on the nomination until after the political campaign season is over. Action on a Supreme Court nomination must be put off until after the election campaign is over.

So it strikes me as rather hypocritical for our Democratic friends to say that these were the rules when George W. Bush was in office or when his father, George Herbert Walker Bush, was in office, in the case of 1992, but now that President Obama is in office, a different set of rules ought to apply.

It would be completely hypocritical of them to say that. But this is a matter of disagreement. There is no debate about that. But it does not mean that just because we are divided along party lines on this matter that there are other things we cannot do together. I think our friends across the aisle would agree that there is a lot of important work that we can and should do together.

The chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, along with the ranking member from Washington, has worked diligently on energy legislation that we are currently considering. It is legislation that would update and modernize our country's energy infrastructure for the 21st century. We still need to find a way forward to deal with this legislation. I